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Speaking Points

The Honourable Tony Clement, PC, MP
Minister of Industry

Launch of the Knowledge Infrastructure Program

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Check Against Delivery

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you, Margo, for that warm introduction. It's a pleasure to be here today.

I don't need to tell any of you here today that we meet at a historic moment. Since last fall, the global economic situation has deteriorated further than anyone predicted.

By definition, a crisis is a moment of dramatic upheaval, a turning point that causes one to analyze the paths previously taken. It is easy to be preoccupied with the economic challenges that we face daily, but we should also be aware that we are at a point where opportunity is also present. Today we are better able to facilitate a shift in Canada toward a knowledge-based economy.

Canada is a land rich in resources, but there is no greater resource than our people. We are a dynamic nation of creative, hard-working, inventive and productive men and women. Government stimulus can be part of the solution, but it is our people who will drive our economy from where we are today to our future prosperity.

In the global context, Canada continues to fare better than many other countries. Our government has reduced taxes, paid down debt and invested in infrastructure. Our recently released Economic Action Plan builds on these strengths and sets the path for Canada's future economic success.

In our pre-budgetary process, we consulted with thousands of Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, and found a remarkable degree of consensus. From Corner Brook to Kamloops, Iqaluit to Winnipeg, Canadians agree. We must do what it takes to keep our economy moving, to create new opportunities for Canadians and to build for the future.

Organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, the G20 and the G7 have all called for coordinated economic stimulus in all industrialized nations.

In both Canada and the U.S., infrastructure investment has been identified as key to short-term economic stimulus, given the recent decline in housing, construction and business investments.

Infrastructure investment forms the backbone of future economic prosperity. Building projects create new, good jobs — in construction, engineering, science and technology, and manufacturing. This creates opportunities in other industries as well.

So, our government, in Canada's Economic Action Plan, is taking immediate action to improve infrastructure. In fact, we are launching one of the largest national infrastructure programs in our country's history.

Part of that undertaking is why we are here today.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to announce the launch of Canada's new Knowledge Infrastructure Program,a two-year, $2-billion economic stimulus measure to support infrastructure enhancement at post-secondary institutions across Canada.

Through the Program, universities, colleges, publicly funded polytechnic schools, institutes of technology and CEGEPs can apply for federal support for deferred maintenance, repair and expansion projects on much-needed infrastructure.

This initiative is the next substantive investment in the Government of Canada's multi-year Science and Technology Strategy, *Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage*. It will provide a significant short-term economic stimulus in communities across the country. It will enable our institutions to attract, train and retain the highly skilled workers of tomorrow. It will put many Canadians to work. It will also ensure that those at the forefront of our knowledge economy — our students, researchers, technicians and professors — will have the conditions they need to succeed in their endeavours.

We heard from the presidents of post-secondary institutions. National organizations — such as the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges — told us that, more than any other priority, they were seeking federal funding to address the deteriorating state of their research infrastructure. We listened and acted.

The new investments will focus on projects ready to start construction. This new funding will be available for the next two years, while the need for economic stimulus is greatest.

To break ground on these projects quickly, we have asked the provinces and territories to identify priorities where work could begin immediately. We are taking action now to reduce red tape and needless duplication.

These investments will create jobs for people now, while providing the infrastructure that universities and colleges need for years to come.

In Canada's Economic Action Plan, we are meeting the challenge of our time.

During this global recession, we are creating opportunities, while stimulating our economy and making the investments necessary to ensure the country's long-term prosperity.

More importantly, our plan meets the needs and expressed wishes of Canadians.

It builds up our communities. And it puts more money in the hands of Canadian families. It helps Canadians who are out of work. It helps Canadian jobs and businesses.

Canada's Economic Action Plan is a truly national plan, reflecting a strong consensus among Canadians on the way forward.

We are building a new knowledge-based economy — one where our manufacturing core can benefit from new products and innovations; one where our scientists and entrepreneurs can find the support they need to get their ideas to market; and one where investors will find greater opportunity.

Our actions will ensure that the right conditions are in place so that Canada remains the best place in the world in which to live, work and invest.

Thank you.

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